

WHAT IS A WATERSHED ?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point, such as a nearby creek, stream or river. Every small watershed drains to a larger watershed that eventually flows to the ocean.

Watershed supports a wide variety of plants and wildlife and provide many outdoor recreation opportunities. By protecting the health of our watershed we can preserve and enhance the quality of life for our area residents.

What is Storm Water Runoff?

Storm water is water from rain or melting snow. It flows from rooftops, over paved streets, sidewalks and parking lots, across bare soil, and through lawns and storm drains. As it flows, runoff collects and transports soil, pet waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease, litter and other pollutants to the nearest watershed. This water drains directly into creeks, streams and rivers, without receiving treatment at sewage plants.

Polluted storm water contaminates creeks, streams, and rivers. It can kill or damage plants, fish and wildlife, while degrading the quality of our water.



A typical watershed system

***THINK GREEN WHEN
WASHING YOUR CAR AND
FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM
THIS BROCHURE TO
PROTECT OUR LOCAL
WATER RESOURCES.***



This Brochure has been distributed to you by the Huntington VAMC in an effort to increase your knowledge of our storm water management program and educational efforts.

***WASHING YOUR CAR
without washing the
environment!***



When you are washing your car in the driveway, remember you are not just washing your car in the driveway. All the soap, scum, and oily grit comes off the car and runs along the curb, and then into the storm drain and directly into our streams and rivers. These actions cause pollution and is unhealthy for fish and aquatic wildlife.

**Only Rain Down
The Drain**

The FACTS about Car Washing!

For many, car washing is a springtime ritual. Often, citizens don't realize that by washing all the winter grime from their vehicles they are harming our local waterways.

Water entering storm drains, unlike water that enters sanitary sewers, does not undergo treatment before it is discharged into our waterways. When cars are washed on streets and driveways, the dirty water eventually winds up in our streams, creeks and rivers.

Washing one car may not seem to be a problem, but collective car washing adds up to big problems for our local streams, creeks and rivers. Pollution associated with car washing degrades water quality and finds also finding its way into sediments, impacting aquatic habitats.



What is the PROBLEM with Car Washing?

There's no problem with washing your car it's just how and where you do it. Dirty water containing soap, detergents, residue from exhaust, gasoline, heavy metals, and motor oils can wash off cars and flow directly into storm drains which run directly into our streams and rivers.

Soap detergents can have a poisonous effect on all types of aquatic life. Detergents can also cause severe damage to the gills of fish and destroy the external mucus layers that protect them from bacteria and parasites. Additionally, too much soap in the water can make it difficult for aquatic organisms to get the oxygen from the water. Without oxygen, they cannot survive.



Washing your car is only a problem if you don't know where or how to do it correctly. Be conscientious of your water usage. Homeowners use an average of 116 gallons of water to wash a car while commercial car washes get the job done with 60% less water.

What can YOU do?

The best way to minimize the effect washing your car has on the environment is to use a commercial car wash. Most locations reuse wash water several times before sending it to treatment plants.



However, if you choose to wash your car at home, these are some things that you can do to minimize the water quality impact:

- Use biodegradable, phosphate-free, water based cleaners only.
- Minimize water usage; use a spray gun to minimize water volume and runoff.
- Wash on an area that absorbs water, such as gravel, or grass. These surfaces filter water before it enters groundwater, storm drains or creeks. Avoid washing cars on concrete or asphalt pavement unless it drains into a vegetated area.
- Always empty wash buckets into sinks or toilet that flow to a local treatment plant.

What kind of SOAP can I use to wash my car?

Choose a biodegradable soap specifically formulated for automobiles such as Simple Green's Car Wash at http://www.simplegreen.com/products_car_wash.php or Green Earth Technologies at <http://www.getg.com/otherProducts/hdhCarWash.php>